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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 5208  
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 7782  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1449  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3737  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1895  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005392

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: THAI MFA FOCUSING ON PROSPECTS OF DIALOGUE IN BURMA

REF: A. A. BANGKOK 5367

[1](#)B. B. BANGKOK 5315

[1](#)C. C. BANGKOK 5314

[1](#)D. D. BANGKOK 5234

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Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Thailand views the GOB offer to open a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) as a promising avenue to begin reconciliation in Burma, but prefers to follow the lead of the UN according to an MFA working-level official. Moreover, he believes that ASEAN and Thailand's relationship with the GOB has become less close since the removal of Khin Nyunt. The result is that the Thais feel whatever influence they do have with the GOB must be focused on UN supported efforts.  
END SUMMARY.

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UN SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD  
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[1](#)2. (C) The RTG viewed the UN as the central and most important actor in resolving the current crisis in Burma and putting Burma on the road to democracy, stated Thai MFA Director in the Department of East Asian Affairs Kallayana Vipattipumiprates in a meeting with us on October 11. (Note: Rangoon PolOff participated in this meeting as part of his consultations in Bangkok.) Kallayana began the meeting by informing us that UN Special Envoy Gambari spoke with Thai Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram just prior to the UNSC meeting on October 5. Gambari informed Nitya that he was

"cautiously optimistic" about the prospects for dialogue between the GOB and ASSK, and presented himself as "a ladder for ASSK to climb up and Than Shwe to climb down."

13. (C) Kallayana emphasized that the Thais believed any tactic used with the GOB must take into account whether or not the GOB would find such an approach palatable. Dialogue could be considered to be acceptable to both the GOB and the opposition, he opined, and it was the UN that should take the lead in creating such an opportunity. The Thais believed that Gambari's efforts should be viewed as part of a long term process to resolve the situation in Burma, not a one-time cure-all event.

14. (C) Dialogue would complement Burma's 'Roadmap to Democracy', according to Kallayana, and could influence the drafting of the constitution. It would also help maintain the momentum pushing for change, with the possibility of a referendum on the constitution occurring as early as 2009, he predicted. He described the regime's newly-appointed liaison Aung Kyi as flexible and pragmatic and someone who had experience working with foreigners due to his involvement with the ILO over the issue of forced labor. Perhaps more importantly, Kallayana continued, Aung Kyi was one of only a handful of officers trusted by both Than Shwe and Maung Aye.

15. (C) Kallayana stated that a real dialogue should include major stakeholders, including the NLD and the ethnic minority groups, but he doubted the GOB would allow others to join the discussion. Furthermore, Kallayana thought the other stakeholders may not accept ASSK as their sole representative, further weakening the effectiveness of any such dialogue. Nonetheless, he stated that the RTG would not push for anything else but would instead focus on the role of the UN.

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THAI VIEW OF BURMA BECOMING NUANCED?  
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16. (C) While Kallayana was quick to describe the current crisis in Burma as an internal matter and the recent protests as isolated, he also conceded that the Burmese leadership could not ignore the demands for change expressed by thousands of its citizens in the streets in recent weeks. He did not believe that such protests would continue in the near future, though he thought the momentum they created to push for change in Burma should continue.

17. (C) Kallayana claimed that ever since former Burmese Prime Minister Khin Nyunt left office, ASEAN in general and Thailand in particular have not had as close a relationship with the GOB. This impeded the RTG's ability to influence the situation in Burma, Kallayana told us, which is why they were looking to the UN to lead Burma out of the current crisis. "With other countries in ASEAN we can just pick up the phone to talk to each other, but we can no longer do that with Burma." Kallayana foresaw that the RTG's policy to rely on the UN to bring change to Burma would continue through the duration of the current Thai government. However, he held out the possibility that this policy could change after the Thai elections on December 23, and the formation of a new government early in 2008.

18. (C) Despite the general provincial outlook of the Burmese leadership, Kallayana believes that the events of last September affected how they approached the international community, especially the UN. With this in mind, he believed that the USG should remain in close contact with the RTG about Burma, suggesting that it would be productive for us to coordinate our messages. While he acknowledged that our messages would not always be the same, a concerted effort would prevent the GOB from trying to play us off against each other.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Kallayana spent more than six and a half years at the Thai Embassy in Rangoon, and he remains one of the RTG's foremost experts on Burmese relations. Although his personal overview of the state of play within ASEAN differs from that of his boss, MFA Permanent Secretary Virasakdi (reftel A). His willingness to offer his own candid views on the situation in Burma and the corresponding Thai response as well as his repeated reference to the December 23 elections suggests that, at least among career MFA officers, there is interest in changing Thailand's completely hands-off approach to Burma.  
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